

## LAUGHTER.

The Subject of the Latest Sermon by Dr. Talmage.

The Laugh of Skepticism and of Spiritual Exaltation—God's Laugh of Condemnation and Heaven's Laugh of Triumph.

Dr. Talmage, who is in Australia on his round-the-world trip, selected for his latest sermon through the press the subject of "Laughter," the text being taken from Psalm cxvi. 2: "Then was our mouth filled with laughter," and Psalm ii. 4: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." Following is the sermon:

Thirty-eight times does the Bible make reference to this configuration of the features and quick expulsion of breath which we call laughter. Sometimes it is born of the sunshine and sometimes the midnight. Sometimes it stirs the sympathies of angels and sometimes the cacklings of devils. All healthy people laugh. Whether it pleases the Lord or displeases Him; that depends upon when we laugh. My theme to-day is the laughter of the Bible, namely: Sarah's laugh, or that of skepticism; David's laugh, or that of spiritual exaltation; the fool's laugh, or that of sinful merriment; God's laugh, or that of infinite condemnation; Heaven's laugh, or that of eternal triumph.

Scene: An Oriental tent; the occupants, old Abraham and Sarah, perhaps wrinkled and decrepit. Their three guests are three angels—the Lord Almighty one of them. In return for the hospitality shown by the old people, God promises Sarah that she shall become the ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sarah laughs in the face of God; she does not believe it. She is affrighted at what she has done. She denies it. She says: "I didn't laugh." Then God retorted with an emphasis that silenced all dispute: "But thou didst laugh." My friends, the laugh of skepticism in all ages is only the echo of Sarah's laughter. God says He will accomplish a thing and men say it cannot be done. A great multitude laugh at the miracles. They say they are contrary to the laws of nature. What is a law of nature? It is God's way of doing a thing. You ordinarily cross a river at one ferry. To-morrow you change for one day, and you go across another ferry. You make the rule. You ordinarily come in at that door of the church. Suppose that next Sabbath you should come in at the other door? It is a habit you have. Have you not a right to change your habit? A law of nature is God's habit—His way of doing things. If He makes the law, has he not a right to change it at any time he wants to change it? Alas! for the folly of those who laugh at God when He says: "I will do a thing;" they responding: "You can't do it."

God says that the Bible is true—it is all true. Bishop Colenso laughs; Herbert Spencer laughs; Stuart Mill laughs; great German universities laugh; Harvard laughs—softly! A great many of the learned institutions with long rows of professors seated on the fence between Christianity and infidelity laugh softly. They say: "We didn't laugh." That was Sarah's trick. God thunders from the heavens: "But thou didst laugh." The garden of Eden was only a fable. There never was an ark built; or if it was built, it was too small to have two of every kind. The pillar of fire by night was only the northern lights. The ten plagues of Egypt only a brilliant specimen of jugglery. The sea parted, because the wind blew violently a great while from one direction. The sun and moon did not put themselves out of the way for Joshua. Jacob's ladder was only horizontal and picturesque clouds. The destroying angel smiting the first-born in Egypt was only cholera infantum become epidemic. The gullet of the whale, by positive measurement, too small to swallow a prophet. The story of the immaculate conception a shock of old decency. The lame, the dumb, the blind, the halt, cured by mere human surgery. The resurrection of Christ's friend only a beautiful tableau; Christ and Lazarus and Mary and Martha acting their parts well. My friends, there is not a doctrine or statement of God's holy word that has not been derided by the skepticism of the day. I take up the book of King James' translation. I consider it a perfect Bible; but here are skeptics who want it tore to pieces. And now, with this Bible in my hand, let me tear out all those portions which the skepticism of this day demands shall be torn out. What shall go first? "Well," says one in the audience, "take out all that about the creation, and the first settlement of the world." Away goes Genesis. "Now," says one, "take out all that about the miraculous guidance of the children of Israel in the wilderness." Away goes Exodus. "Now," says one, "there are things in Deuteronomy and Kings that are not fit to be read." Away go Deuteronomy and Kings. "Now," says one, "the Book of Job is a fable that ought to come out." Away goes the Book of Job. "Now," says one, "those passages in the New Testament which imply the divinity of Jesus Christ ought to come out." Away go the Evangelists. "Now," says one, "the Book of Revelation—how preposterous! it represents a man with the moon under his feet, and a sharp sword in his hand." Away goes the Book of Revelation. Now there are a few pieces left. What shall we do with them? "Oh," says some man in the audience, "I don't believe a word in the Bible, from one end to the other." Well, it is all gone. Now you have put out the last light for the nations. Now it is the pitch darkness of eternal midnight. How do you like it?

But I think, my friends, we had better keep the Bible a little longer intact. It has done pretty well for a good many years. There were old

people who find it a comfort to have it on their laps and children like the stories in it. Let us keep it for a curiosity, anyhow. If the Bible is to be thrown out of the school and out of the court room, so that men no more swear by it, and it is to be put in a dark corridor of the city library, the Koran on one side and the writings of Confucius on the other, then let us each one keep a copy for himself, for we might have trouble, and we would want to be under the delusions of its consolations; and we might die, and we would want the delusion of the exalted residence of God's right hand which it mentions. Of what an awful thing it is to laugh in God's face, and hurl his revelations back at him. After awhile the day will come when they will say they did not laugh. Then all the hypercriticisms, all the caricatures, and all the learned sneers in the "Quarterly Reviews," will be brought to judgment; and amid the rocking of everything beneath and amid the flaming of everything above, God will thunder: "But thou didst laugh!"

The next laughter mentioned in the Bible is David's laughter, or the expression of spiritual exaltation. "Then was our mouth filled with laughter." He got very much down sometimes; but there are other chapters where for four or five times he calls upon the people to praise and exult. It was not a mere twitch of the lips; it was a demonstration that took hold of the whole physical nature. "Then was our mouth filled with laughter." My friends, this world will never be converted to God until Christians cry less, and laugh and sing more. The horrors are a poor bait. If people are to be persuaded to adopt our holy religion, it will be because they have made up their minds it is a happy religion. They don't like a morbid Christianity. I know there are morbid people who enjoy a funeral. They come early to see the friends take leave of the corpse; and they steal a ride to the cemetery; but all healthy people enjoy a wedding better than they do a burial.

Now, you take the religion of Christ, sepulchral and hearselike, and you make it repulsive. I say, plant the rose of Sharon along the church walks, and columbine to clamber over the church wall; and have a smile on your lip, and have the mouth filled with holy laughter. There is no man in the world, except the Christian, that has the right to feel an untrammelled glee. He is promised everything that is to be for the best here, and he is on the way to a delight which will take all the processions with palm branches, and all the orchestras harped, and symphoned, and trumpeted to express, "O," you say, "I have so much trouble." Have you any more trouble than Paul had? What does he say? "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Poor, yet making many rich. Having nothing, yet possessing all things." The merriest laugh I think I ever heard has been in the sick room of God's dear children.

The next laughter mentioned in the Bible that I shall speak of is the fool's laughter, or the expression of sinful merriment. Solomon was very quick at simile; when he makes a comparison we all catch it. What is the laughter of a fool like? He says: "It is the crackling of thorns under a pot." The kettle is swung, a bunch of brambles is put under it, and the torch is applied to it, and there is a great noise, and a big blaze, and a sputter and a quick extinguishment. Then it is darker than it was before. Fool's laughter. The most miserable thing on earth is a bad man's fun. There they are—ten men in a bar room; they have at home wives, mothers, daughters. The impure jest starts at one corner of the bar room and crackle, crackle, crackle, it goes all around. In five hundred such guffaws there is not one item of happiness. They all feel demeaned, if they have any conscience left. Have nothing to do with men or women who tell immoral stories. I have no confidence either in their Christian character or their morality. So, all merriment that springs out of the defects of others—caricature of a lame foot, or a curved spine, or a blind eye, or a deaf ear—will be met with the judgment of God, either upon you, or upon your children.

The next laughter that I shall mention as being in the Bible, is the laugh of God's condemnation: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." Again: "The Lord will laugh at him." Again: "I will laugh at his calamity." With such demonstration will God meet every kind of great sin and wickedness. But men build up villanous higher and higher. Good men almost pity God, because he is so schemed against by men. Suddenly a pin drops out of the machinery of wickedness, or a secret is revealed, and the foundation begins to rock; finally the whole thing is demolished. What is the matter? I will tell you what the matter is: That crash of ruin is only the reverberation of God's laughter.

In the money market there are a great many good men and a great many fraudulent men. A fraudulent man there says: "I mean to have my million." He goes to work reckless of honesty, and he gets his \$100,000. He gets after awhile his \$200,000. After awhile he gets his \$300,000. Now, he says, "I have only one more move to make, and I shall have my million." He gathers up all his resources; he makes that one last grand move, he falls and loses all, and he has not enough money of his own left to pay the cost of the car to his home. People cannot understand the spasmodic revulsion. Some said it was a sudden turn in Erie railway stock, or in Western Union, or in Illinois Central; some said one thing and some another. They all guessed wrong. I will tell you what it was: "He that sitteth in the heavens laughed." Rome was a great empire. She had Horace and Virgil among her poets; she had Augustus and Constantine amongst her emperors. But what mean the defaced pantheon, and the broken-walled coliseum, and the architectural skeleton of her great aqueducts? What was that thunder?

"Oh," you say, "that was the roar of the battering-rams against her walls." No. What was that quiver? "Oh," you say, "that was the tramp of hostile legions." No. The quiver and the roar were the outbursts of omnipotent laughter from the defied and insulted heavens. Rome defied God, and He laughed her down. Thebes defied God, and He laughed her down. Nineveh defied God, and He laughed her down. Babylon defied God, and He laughed her down. There is a great difference between God's laugh and His smile. His smile is eternal beatitude. He smiled when David sang, and Miriam clapped the cymbals, and Hannah made garments for her son, and Paul preached, and John kindled with apocalyptic vision, and when any man has anything to do and does it well. His smile! Why, it is the 15th of May, the apple orchards in full bloom; it is morning breaking on a rippling sea; it is Heaven at high noon, all the bells beating the marriage peal. But His laughter—may it never fall on us! It is a condemnation for our sin; it is a wasting away. We may let the satirist laugh at us, and all our companions may laugh at us, and we may be made the target for the merriment of earth and hell; but God forbid that we should ever come to the fulfillment of the prophecy against the rejectors of the truth: "I will laugh at your calamity."

But, my friends, all of us who reject Christ and the pardon of the gospel must come under that tremendous bombardment. God wants us to repent. He counsels, He coaxes, He importunes, and He dies for us. He comes down out of Heaven. He puts all the world's sins on one shoulder. He puts all the world's sorrow on the other shoulder, and then with that Alp on one side and that Himalaya on the other, He starts up the hill back of Jerusalem to achieve our salvation. He puts the palm of His right foot on one long spike, and He puts the palm of His left foot on another long spike, and then, with His hands spotted with His own blood, He gestures, saying: "Look! look! and live. With the crimson veil of my sacrifice I will cover up all your sins; with my dying groan I will swallow up all your groans. Look! live." But a thousand of you turn your back on that, and then this voice of invitation turns to a tone divinely ominous, that says like a simoon through the first chapter of Proverbs: "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my right hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I, also, will laugh at your calamity."

The other laughter mentioned in the Bible, the only one I shall speak of, is Heaven's laughter, or the expression of eternal triumph. Christ said to His disciples: "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh." That makes me know positively that we are not to spend our days in heaven singing longer psalms. The formalistic and stiff notions of Heaven that some people have would make me miserable. I am glad to know that the Heaven of the Bible is not only a place of holy worship, but of magnificent sociality. "What," you say, "will the ringing laugh will go around the circles of the saved?" I say, yes; pure laughter, cheering laughter, holy laughter. It will be a laugh of reassociation. It is just as natural for us to laugh when we meet a friend we have not seen for ten years as anything is possible to be natural. When we meet our friends from whom we have been parted for ten, or twenty, or thirty years, will it not be with infinite congratulation? Our perception quickened, our knowledge improved, we shall know each other at a flash. Exemption from all annoyance. Immersion in all gladness. Ye shall laugh. Christ says so. Yes, it will be a laugh of triumph. Oh! what a pleasant thing it will be to stand on the wall of Heaven and look down at Satan, and hurl at him defiance, and see him caged and chained, and we free from his clutches.

You know how the Frenchmen cheered when Napoleon came back from Elba; you know how the English cheered when Wellington came back from Waterloo; you know how Americans cheered when Kosuth arrived from Hungary; you remember how Rome cheered when Pompey came back victor over 900 cities. Every cheer was a laugh. But, oh! the mightier greeting, the gladder greeting, when the snow-white cavalry troop of Heaven shall go through the streets, and, according to the Book of Revelation, Christ, in the red coat, the crimson coat, on a white horse, and all the armies of Heaven following on white horses. Oh! when we see and hear that cavalcade, we shall cheer, we shall laugh. Does not your heart beat quickly at the thought of the great jubilee upon which we are soon to enter? I pray God that when we get through with this world and are going out of it, we may have some such vision as the dying Christian had when he saw written all over the clouds in the sky the letter "W"; and they asked him, standing by his side, what he thought that letter "W" meant. "Oh," he said, "that stands for welcome." And so may it be when we quit this world. "W" on the gate, "W" on the door of the mansion, "W" on the throne. Welcome! Welcome! Welcome!

I have preached this sermon with five prayerful wishes: that you might see what a mean thing is the laugh of spiritual exaltation, what a hollow thing is the laugh of sinful merriment, what an awful thing is the laugh of condemnation, what a radiant, rubicund thing is the laugh of eternal triumph. Avoid the ill; choose the right. Be comforted. "Blessed are ye that weep now—ye shall laugh, ye shall laugh."

—The proportion of whites have increased and that of the colored population has decreased at each census excepting those taken in 1810 and 1880.

—In Mississippi the urban population is but 2.64 per cent. of the whole; in North Carolina, 3.67; in Arkansas, 4.88.

## SENATE SCENE.

Tariff the Subject of a Lively Debate in the Senate.

Mr. Hill Makes a Remarkable Defense of the President's Letter on the Tariff Bill—Mr. Vest's Reply.

In the United States senate on July 30, the question of the disagreement of the conference committee on the tariff bill being under discussion, Senator Hill, of New York, spoke with much feeling. He said:

A theory as well as a condition now confronts us. The theory of the democratic party is that in the enactment of tariff legislation free raw materials should be an essential and conspicuous element; it is our creed that the materials which enter into our manufactures should be freed from the burden of tariff taxation. The best interests of the manufacturers as well as the consumers of the land demand the recognition of this wise discrimination. We are committed to this side of the question and we cannot retreat and we cannot retract. We are honorably bound to redeem our professions and our promises. Justice, good faith and a decent regard for public sentiment all require this.

Until recently I had supposed that there was no question of principle, but that every democratic worthy of the name was willing to concede that if there was one thing more than another to which the democratic party was committed, it was in favor of the doctrine of absolute free raw materials. The true and honest construction of every democratic national platform for twelve years past irrevocably commits us to this just and reasonable principle.

Mr. Hill read the democratic national platform of 1892, and continued: To repeal the McKinley law in form simply; to re-enact it in effect, is keeping this promise to the letter but breaking it in spirit. The platform pointed with pride and deliberately approved the measure for free iron ore, free coal and free wool, which were pending in congress at the time of the convention. The democratic position was so plain and so clear that he "was unable to say more."

If any democratic senator in any part of the country, forgetting the interests of the whole and subserving the supposed interests of a locality, promised the people of any state or section that there would be any exception made to the enforcement of the general principle of raw materials when the democrats should obtain power, he exceeded his authority and misinterpreted our position.

It is said by some in justification or excuse for their present action, that the president's letter of acceptance in 1892 modified the extreme demands of our platform. It is true that some portions of his letter may tend to bear that construction. It was not that bold, ringing and explicit declaration in favor of the platform which his party had a right to expect, but was regarded as timid, cautious and conservative; but whether this criticism is or is not well founded, the fact remains that he had no power or authority to change or alter one line or sentence or provision of the national platform which had been deliberately adopted by the national convention assembled in 1892. No president can be above his party; no president can dictate to his party; no president can change his party platform.

But no matter what idea it may be claimed was intended to be conveyed in his letter of acceptance or modification of the platform, there can be no doubt as to the president's position at this time upon this essential principle of free raw materials. Let me read from that remarkable letter of the president's which was yesterday presented to the house of representatives. It expresses better than any question I can do the true, sound and logical position of the democratic party upon this question.

After reading extracts from this letter, Mr. Hill continued: Mr. President, I approve of every word that I have quoted. It is an honest and manly statement of the true attitude which the party should assume in this crisis. I am not required to defend the propriety or wisdom of this promulgation of this letter at this peculiar time. It may have been indiscreet; it may operate as a fire-brand to spread the flames of discord already kindled among party friends, honestly differing as I am disposed to concede upon questions of public and party policy. It was a time for diplomacy, statesmanship and conciliation, rather than recrimination, denunciation and arraignment. But aside from the question of its mere expediency, I am here to defend the president's letter in so far as it demands that the party shall not be led astray into the violation of democratic pledges and principles.

Upon the question of free raw materials the president is right, and you know it. You cannot answer his arguments. You cannot successfully dispute his propositions. You cannot doubt his sincerity and patriotism. You must yield in the end to his views. You cannot stand up against the sentiment of the democratic masses of the country which will rally around the president in his contest with you upon this particular branch of the subject. The time of the field is now, before there is further humiliation, embarrassment and discord.

Mr. President, having demonstrated that the true democratic theory of revenue reform requires that free raw materials should be its distinguishing feature, let us next inquire what is the condition which now confronts us. The senate bill which was passed violates this democratic theory, and while it reduces the duty on iron, coal and some other raw materials from those imposed under the McKinley law, and in that respect is commendable, it nevertheless imposes some duties thereon, and thereby fails to redeem our pledges. It is not a question of the amount of duties which may be imposed but a question of principle involved, and a single penny's duty violates our promises and places us in a false position. As the president well says, there can be no compromise on a question of this character, where a vital principle was at stake.

The house of representatives, fresh from the people, which represents more distinctly and peculiarly than we do the taxing power of the people, repudiates our bill, and a democratic president has emphasized that repudiation, and the condition which confronts us is one of extreme embarrassment. Shall we surrender to the house while we can do so honorably, or shall we wait until we are driven to it in the light of the letter of the president the house cannot honorably retreat. It has no other alternative except to insist upon its bill wherein it provides for free raw materials. The president cannot, apparently, make a better case for his position than this remarkable letter. He arraigns the senate and intimates that the enactment of the senate bill means "party perjury and party dishonor." These are strong words, which the president of the United States would not use toward a measure which he ever expected afterward to approve.

This letter, unusual and unprecedented in its character and method of promulgation, though it may be, nevertheless clearly throws shadows upon the taxing power of the house, should finally concur in our amendments. What person would expect the president to approve the senate bill after its vigorous and scathing denunciation contained in his letter. You would think less of him for his glaring inconsistency. No, this letter is a prudent letter. It means war to the knife against the senate bill; it justifies much that has been said against the senate bill during the last three months. It means that it can never receive the executive approval; it means that the senate cannot be permitted to abandon or surrender the great underlying principles for which we fought and won in 1892. The president is right; there is no middle ground which we can occupy. No bill which does not provide for free raw materials can be permitted to become a law. It is unnecessary to enter into any argument to define or designate what articles constitute raw materials. Every democratic knows what they are. Any article may be considered raw material when it is in the lowest or crude state. This definition is ample and sufficient and will redeem our pledges if it is honestly applied. The party platform was for free, not freer raw materials as is now ingeniously construed.

If the president in his wisdom had seen fit, while the debate was progressing in the senate, to have added my efforts to secure adherence to the principle, by expressing his views in favor thereof, in some proper and legitimate way, we should have been gratified, and it would unquestionably have been of practical benefit to the cause. I rejoice that he has expressed them even now, although I am not required to defend the manner of his presentation even if they are so required. While I do not assume to respectfully differ from the president in his assumption that a tax upon sugar is necessary at this time, conceding that an income tax is to be retained; clearly both are not needed for any legitimate purposes of the treasury.

The president speaks of the "democratic principle and policy which led to the taxation of sugar," and he asserts that "we are in no danger of running counter to democratic principles." I desire only to suggest that if it was desirable that sugar should be taxed, "as a legitimate and logical article of revenue taxation," as he now says, it seems strange that the president did not in his last annual message make some intimation, suggestion or recommendation to that effect.

Mr. Hill, in closing his speech, called attention to the fact that the president, who had been so often quoted in the tariff debate as favoring an income tax, had at last come out in no uncertain tones against it. He trusted the president's words would have their effect. He (Hill) wanted to perfect this bill. He knew it was claimed his wishes should not be consulted because he did not intend to vote for this bill. He never should vote for it so long as it contained the income tax, but he wanted to see it made defensible.

Mr. Hill in a most dramatic manner concluded by declaring that unless the democrats of the senate yielded their vote to go to the wall, and the president would go to the front.

Mr. Vest Replies.

Mr. Vest took the floor when Mr. Hill was seated. After the speech of the senator from New York, he began, it was a subject of congratulation that he and the president had at last found a platform on which both could stand. The lion and lamb had at last lain down together and were led as a little child by the ways and means committee. He left to the other side which was the lion and which was the lamb. The senator from New York had said that free raw material was a cardinal principle of democracy. The president went further and declared that failure to place free raw material on the free list was democratic perjury and dishonor. Why did not the senator from New York vote for free wool, he asked.

"I did not vote on several motions when the bill was in committee," replied Mr. Hill, "but I distinctly voted for free wool in the senate."

"If my very soul was thrilling and pulsating for free raw materials," retorted Mr. Vest, sarcastically, "at the peril of my life I should have been on hand to vote on every roll call for the cardinal principle of the democracy."

Mr. Vest then proceeded to read the letter of acceptance of President Cleveland in 1892, pronouncing in favor of freer raw material. Yet now he denounced freer raw materials as perjury and dishonor.

Mr. Vest declared he had been the president's second, he had defended him on the floor of the senate when his friends could have been counted on the fingers of one hand. Where did the president get the right to dictate to congress? To denounce one branch of congress to the other? Did he embody in his single being all the democracy, all the tariff reform sentiment in this country? Mr. Cleveland was a big man, but the democratic party was greater than any one.

It had survived Jefferson, Madison, Jackson; it would survive Grover Cleveland.

Under what clause of the constitution did Mr. Cleveland get the right after a bill had been sent to "full and free" conference between the two houses to make an appeal to his party friends to stand by his individual views?

Mrs. Madison had said in her memoirs that the capitol had been placed at one of the avenue and the White house at the other to prevent the president from exercising an undue influence on the legislative branch of the government. If the president could send word to his friends to stand firm, he had the right to send his cabinet ministers here to coerce members of congress; he had a right to do as he had during the fight over the repeal of the Sherman law, punish recalcitrant members of his own party.

It was a mockery to talk of a full and free conference when one of the conferees came to the committee room with the orders of the president in his pocket. Mr. Vest spoke with bitterness of the president's denunciation of the senate bill, which had been passed after four months of such toil and responsibility as he should never assume again. Yet, he said, those who were instrumental in harmonizing the differences and bringing about its passage—tariff reformers before Mr. Cleveland began his phenomenal career—had been arraigned as traitors who sought to dishonor their party.

Personally, the bill did not suit him. He was a radical tariff reformer, but if he could not get all he would take what he could get.

"I give it as my opinion," he declared in conclusion, "that we pass this bill or nothing."

To a question from Mr. Aldrich Mr. Vest replied: "When I first saw the president's letter placing on us the odium of framing a bill that means dishonor to the democratic party, to use but a mild expression, I was struck with infinite amazement. I am not here to defend or attack the administration, but to proclaim the rectitude of our motives."

"The defense which the senator from New York has made of the president," added Mr. Vest, "reminds me of a desperate murder case which I once tried. The only defense I was able to make was that the accused was suffering from such utter moral depravity that he was absolutely incapable of crime. He was acquitted. Afterward he came to me to thank me for the verdict. In doing so he said, however, that he would rather go to the penitentiary for life than again listen to the defense I made of him." [Laughter.]

## THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

International Lesson for July 30, 1894—The Youth of Jesus—Luke 2:40-52.

[Specially Arranged from Peabody's Notes.] GOLDEN TEXT.—And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.—Luke 2:52.

PLACE IN THE STORY.—This lesson is the closing one on the period of the childhood and youth of Jesus. It belongs between the second and third chapters of Matthew.

PARALLEL.—The briefest hints of this period are found in Matt. 2:23 and Mark 6:3. TIME.—April. A. D. 9. The Passover was that year, March 29 (Lewin's Passover). Jesus was twelve years old December, A. D. 8, and this was the following spring.

PLACE.—Nazareth and Jerusalem.

JESUS, between twelve and thirteen years old, living in Nazareth.

JOHN, six months older than Jesus, early retired to the solitude of the wilderness where he spent his youth till he was thirty years old, as Jesus spent his in the town among the activities of life.

REVEREND.—Augustus Caesar, emperor of Rome toward the end of his reign. Copontus, governor of Judea, which had lately become a Roman province. Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great), ruler of Galilee and Perea.

LESSON NOTES.

A Growing Boy.—V. 40. First. Physical Development. Jesus, the Divine Child, was completely human, as He was completely Divine; He grew in knowledge and wisdom as He grew in stature and strength, went, in short, through all the natural gradations of childish and youthful development.—Prof. Kendrick.

Second. Strength and Activity. The words "in spirit" are omitted in the revised version, according to the best authorities, but the meaning is much the same. The "waxed strong" refers to his whole nature—both to the physical growth mentioned before and to the wisdom that follows. Jesus was a strong, active, sturdy boy. He was what we mean by "a real boy," full of life, ready for every boyish deed, only He used all His strength and activity in pure and noble ways, in helping His mother, in just and loving actions to His fellows. What a blessing such a boy is! He was a success as a boy. He needed this perfect body, in order that He might endure the severe strain and burden of His public ministry. Every boy that cares for true success in life should take care of his body, the instrument of his soul.

Third. Spiritual Development. He grew strong by being filled with wisdom. This refers to "His spiritual, intellectual and religious development. The wisdom comprises, on the one hand, the knowledge of God; on the other, a penetrating understanding of men and things from a Divine point of view. The image, filling himself, appears to be that of a vessel, which, while increasing in size, fills itself, and by filling itself enlarges so as to be continually holding more."—Godek. Jesus was wise in every direction—in His common sense as applied to daily life, in mental studies and opinions, and in His moral decisions. And this wisdom was one great source of His strength. The bad habits which weaken boys—the idleness, gluttony, waste of nerve power in smoking, drinking and other bad habits—are all the fruit of folly.

His School and Schoolmasters.—We can understand the childhood and youth of Jesus better when we remember the surrounding influences amid which He grew.

First. The natural scenery was rugged and mountainous, but full of beauty. He breathed the pure air. He lived in a village, not in a city. He learned to work as well as play. It is quite noteworthy how many of the strongest, greatest and most prominent men in the cities were brought up in the country.

Second. The Roman dominion was irksome and galling. The people of God were subject to a foreign yoke. The taxes were heavy. Roman soldiers, laws, money, ever reminded them of their subjection, when they ought to be free and themselves the rulers of the world. When Jesus was ten years old there was a great insurrection (Acts 5:37) in Galilee. He who was to be King of the Jews heard and felt all this, and was filled with patriotic impulses.

Third. The Jewish hopes of a Redeemer, of throwing off their bondage, of becoming the glorious nation promised in the prophets, were in the very air He breathed. The conversation at home and in the streets was full of them.

Fourth. Within His view and the bounds of His boyish excursions, were many remarkable historic places—rivers, hills, cities, plains—that would keep in mind the history of His people and God's dealings with them. "There could not be a national history, nor even romance, to compare with that by which a Jewish mother might hold her child entranced. And it was His own history—that of His tribe, clan, perhaps family."—Eldersheim.

Fifth. His School Training. Here are a few of the innumerable popular sayings of the period: "The world is only saved by the breath of the school children." "Even for the rebuilding of the temple the schools must not be interrupted."—Mr. Deutsch, in Quarterly Review. In the village schools Jesus learned to read and write, and to memorize, not only Scripture, "but the countless precepts of the rabbis." It was school and Sunday school in one. His language was Aramaic, but He probably also understood Greek and the Bible Hebrew.

Sixth. His Home Training. From the first days of His existence a religious atmosphere surrounded the child of Jewish parents. And this atmosphere is the most important element in the training of a child.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

Jesus was once a child, so that He can be the children's Saviour, having passed through all their experiences and temptations, "yet without sin."

Religion, obedience, mental and moral activity, are as natural to a strong, active, vigorous boy as to one who is sickly or weak.

It belongs to the very essence of Christian duty that we should make the most of ourselves, that we should develop all our powers, and know as much of this mysterious life that we are living, of its laws and methods and duties, as is possible.—T. T. Munger.